



February 11, 2004

Providence man is arrested in alleged illegal gun purchase

Federal agents and Providence Police officers yesterday arrested **Sonny Feliciano**, 26, of Providence, after he allegedly purchased a nine millimeter pistol from an under cover agent. According to an affidavit, Feliciano is a convicted felon and cannot legally possess firearms. Agents allege that they also found several other guns and some crack cocaine at Feliciano's home.

The Office of the United States Attorney, Monty J. Monteiro, Resident Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and Colonel Dean Esserman, Chief of the Providence Police Department, jointly announced a complaint that was filed today in U.S. District Court, Providence, charging Feliciano with being a felon in possession of a firearm. Feliciano, of 92 Bowdoin Street, third floor, appeared before Magistrate Judge David L. Martin today and was ordered detained.

According to an affidavit supporting the complaint, ATF developed information that Feliciano was interested in buying a handgun "off the books." Two undercover ATF agents had several telephone conversations with Feliciano yesterday and the day before. At 4:30 PM yesterday, an agent met Feliciano in a parking lot off Charles Street, where he showed Feliciano two pistols that were in the trunk of the agent's car. Feliciano gave the agent \$200 and took a Smith & Wesson nine millimeter pistol. Agents and Providence police officers then arrested Feliciano, who discarded the gun and tried to flee when he spotted the arrest team.

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In different locations at the house where Feliciano lives at 92 Bowdoin Street, agents later found a .40 caliber semi-automatic pistol, a 15 gauge, sawed-off shotgun, a 7.62 caliber rifle and quantities of nine millimeter ammunition. They also seized approximately 7.5 grams of crack cocaine in 36 glassine bags.

The charge against Feliciano is a felony and is therefore subject to review by a grand jury. A complaint is merely an allegation and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The ATF Firearms Trafficking and Violent Crime Task Force is investigating the case as part of **Project Safe Neighborhoods**, a Department of Justice initiative against gun crimes. Providence Police, the Rhode Island State Police, the Rhode Island Attorney General, and Warwick Police have officers assigned to the Task Force. Additional Providence Police officers assisted in the arrest and the search of Feliciano's home.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Lee H. Vilker is prosecuting the case.

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